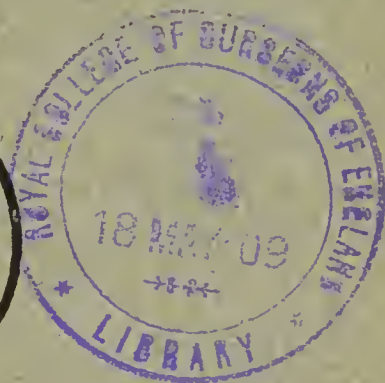
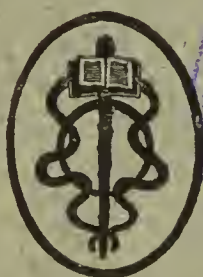


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8 John W. Farlow (4)
The Medical Library and its
Contents

BY
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REPRINTED FROM
THE ÆSCULAPIAN, DECEMBER, 1908
VOL. 1, No. 1

BROOKLYN - NEW YORK
MCMIX



THE MEDICAL LIBRARY AND ITS CONTENTS.*

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THE kind invitation to address you this evening brings to me the very vivid impression that I have but very little of interest to say to you. I shall, however, avail myself of the thought that those who are interested in the same thing are, or may be, interested in each other; and I may certainly take it for granted that we are all interested in getting together the medical literature of the world and housing it in such quarters and in such ways that it will be available for the pleasure and profit of all who wish to consult it. We have only to contemplate what a tremendous loss it would be to the medical profession of New York if this beautiful Library and that of the New York Academy of Medicine were destroyed by fire, to recognize that the gathering together and safe-guarding of these valuable collections are of paramount interest to the whole community. To the student, the recent graduate, the busy practitioner, to all, these libraries furnish the means of knowing what has been thought and done by the great Masters of Medicine in the past and also the very latest theories, suggestions and experiments from the hospitals and laboratories all over the world.

The Medical Library has, in many ways, a very different purpose to fulfill from the Law Library. This fact was brought forcibly to my notice by a visit to the Harvard Law School in Cambridge. I was anxious to learn something of the workings of the so-called "Case System," now very much in favor, and for that reason I attended some of the lectures of the Law School. The student, called upon by the professor to discuss a given case before the class, often cited references and quoted authorities dating from several centuries ago, the underlying principles having continued to be of great influence up to the present time. Decisions of last year or last month seemed to be of no import-

* Address before the Medical Society of the County of Kings, Brooklyn, N. Y., April 21, 1908.

ance unless they harmonized with what had been held true for many years.

In the Law Library I asked to be shown the files of current periodicals, hoping to see evidence of recent activity of thought, of change, but I failed to find more than a meagre number of journals, and these seemed to be considered of no particular importance. When I compared this with the hundreds of journals which the large Medical Library is obliged to take, and when I recalled how eager our readers are to have the very latest journals, even requesting that they come by the fastest European steamers, and often asking to consult them before there has been time to collate and catalogue them, I was impressed with the great differences in the character of the literature of the two professions; the law student seemed to judge the present by the past, the medical student to ignore the past and reach out into the future.

In this search after new facts there has been a great tendency to neglect the underlying truths which have existed in medicine for centuries. The study of the history of medicine has received but scant attention, not at all what it deserves. In very few medical schools is any such instruction given, the already crowded curriculum being alleged as the reason. There has recently, however, been shown much greater interest in the subject, and a number of periodicals devoted to this most important subject have lately appeared. Our Libraries should, and many do, contain valuable material for such study, and it should be their special province to gather together all that relates to local medical history and biography. It is astonishing how difficult it is to find any but the most meagre details of the lives of the medical men of this country. The work that Dr. H. A. Kelly is doing in that direction should prove of great value. The Library should make a special point of medical history and biography and should have a collection of portraits of medical men and a card catalogue showing in what book, journal or pamphlet such portraits can be found.

Some of the most important literature in modern medicine appears in the form of monographs and theses in German or French, and these can generally be consulted only in the original. In this country, the monograph has had but a very small place owing to the difficulties and expense of publication; but since the establishment of the Carnegie, Rockefeller and other Institutions and the greater attention paid by our large universities to

post-graduate and other higher branches of education, we are beginning to get in our Libraries very worthy rivals of what we had always been obliged to look for in Europe. I am very glad to learn that the *Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases* is making arrangements for the publication of a series of similar articles in this country. The cost of making plates for the illustration of scientific articles has always been much higher here than in Europe, but the recent advances in photography have brought about most excellent results at much lower prices.

In England the Sydenham Society felt the importance of bringing this kind of foreign literature to the service of English readers and published a long series of translations of the most important works; but in the progress of English scientific medicine, and with the establishment of laboratories and institutions of research, the need of such publications apparently no longer exists, and the Society is contemplating giving up its work in that direction.

A point which a large collection of valuable monographs, theses and periodicals brings to the front, is the importance to the consulter of such literature of a good reading knowledge of French and German. I often hear it said that it is no longer necessary to go to Europe for a good training in medicine, because the education to be obtained here at our best universities is as good as can be obtained in any other country. Without discussing the merits of such a statement, it is certainly not open to question that the recent graduate who adds to his strictly medical training the ability to read the scientific articles that appear in the periodicals and transactions published in Paris, Berlin, Munich, Vienna and the accounts of the work done in the anatomical, pathological and pharmaceutical institutions of France and Germany must certainly be much better able to keep in close touch with great thinkers of the medical world than the one to whom this great mass of knowledge is available only through incomplete abstracts or delayed and faulty translations. Those of you who have seen some cherished article, to the preparation of which you have devoted much time and thought, bandied about from one journal to another, abstracted, and translated into a foreign language, will appreciate how far the final product is from what issued from your own brain. It has always seemed to me advisable that the recent graduate should, if possible, before going into practice, take a vacation of several months, go to Germany and France, and spend the time in acquiring in the country such a knowledge

of the language as will convince him at least that these are not dead languages, like Greek or Latin, but are very much alive.

Since about 1880 there have been started in this country a great number of National and Special Societies, whose proceedings are very important for a library to possess. Some of the best American work appears in these volumes. The transactions of the National and International Congresses are also filled with very valuable material and libraries should make a special point to get complete sets of all of them.

There is much use made of the *Centralblätter*, or abstracts of all that is published in the various divisions of medicine. As a new subject assumes importance or tends to become differentiated from some other, its own *Centralblatt* appears.

The text book, soon out of date, with its revisions and new editions striving to keep up with the procession, is generally spoken of by librarians in a very disparaging way, but I feel that it is somewhat maligned. It is much used, not only by the student but also by the practitioner, and although much of it may be mere compilation, still, in many ways it represents the experiences of every day practice and, if carefully and honestly thought out, has a definite, even if an ephemeral value. Their disadvantages are that they are generally bulky, are soon antiquated, cost money which would be better spent for works of more permanent value, and the numerous editions take up much needed room on the shelves. Still, I think there is very much truth in a sympathetic editorial which appeared in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* for November 7, 1907. It closes with these words: "There is no question that the estimate of a book at the hands of an expert in the subject under consideration would be far different from that of the practitioner, who, in the endless details of his practice, is eager for a clear and even commonplace presentation of the subject. Much illiberality in the reviewing of books is apparent. They are dismissed often with a few words and with the insistence on the fact that they are superfluous. It would be well to recognize the palpable fact that what is superfluous for one man is a necessity for another, and that many text-books are good just in proportion to the number of physicians they benefit. For our part we welcome new books, recognizing that some of them are excellent and most of them useful. We are strongly disinclined to condemn a book simply because it is a repetition of what has already been said; on the contrary, every encouragement should be offered to writers of

books, in the hope that ultimately results will appear which could be obtained by no means requiring less active competition."

I do not need to emphasize the importance to the library of its periodicals. They are universally recognized as the backbone of its collections, and every effort should be made to have as complete sets as possible. There is, however, great difficulty in securing missing numbers of most American journals. There are but very few second-hand dealers here who make any point of medical literature and issue catalogues. In fact it is much easier to secure odd numbers and parts of sets of foreign journals by ordering of European dealers, than it is to get here the missing numbers of many of our own journals.

I sincerely trust that the great increase in the number of medical libraries which has taken place in the United States in the last few years will stimulate the second-hand dealers in all the large cities, to collect, arrange and catalogue the great mass of American medical periodicals which are now so often turned over to the waste paper man. The cost of sending such material long distances makes it important that there should be places in all parts of the country for dealing in these odds and ends which physicians, publishers and libraries may have to dispose of.

A Medical Library should endeavor to have as many bibliographies as possible, for they are of great service as time savers when looking up any given subject, but only when they are carefully compiled and verified. I have thought that the proof reading of references, especially of those to a foreign language, is not carefully enough attended to, an explanation, but not an excuse, being that they are in small type, much abbreviated and have accents and marks not used in English. It is most advisable to make use of the abbreviations employed in the *Index Catalogue of the Surgeon-General's Library*.

I would like to say a few words in regard to the most valuable medical reference work that exists, whose place no substitute has been able to fill, a universal helper in all countries and in all languages. I refer, of course, to the *Index Medicus*, the monument of Dr. J. S. Billings, for which he deserves the gratitude of the entire medical and scientific world. Its only drawback is the frequent intimation that its publication may be suspended from lack of support by the medical profession. For twenty years it was of the greatest possible value, then came a gap of four years when we were all at sea, and the literature of those years is to a certain extent buried, with no key to its hiding place.

In order for the *Index Medicus* to be of substantial service to the physician, he must have access to the libraries which contain the books and journals referred to. This limits its use to those who live in or near large cities. The doctor's library is generally made up of a few standard text-books and some of the important journals in English. If a specialist, he may have a fairly complete list of the current literature on his own subject, but nothing more, and he soon learns that many references even to special subjects are to be found in general treatises or journals, so that the specialist as well as nearly every general practitioner is obliged to go to the Medical Library for his references, and there he finds the *Index Medicus*, perhaps several copies. If he finds at the Library what he needs and what he cannot use at home he naturally does not subscribe to the *Index Medicus*. This leaves as subscribers Medical, Scientific and some General Libraries and those physicians who from loyalty or public spirit are glad to contribute toward the support of what they consider to be of inestimable value to the profession as a whole. The number of these individual subscribers we are told is not large enough to prevent a great part of the expense of publication falling upon the Carnegie Institution. We are all sorry to admit this fact, but can we not urge upon the Carnegie Trustees that there is nothing they can do with the funds at their disposal of more value to the medical profession than the making possible the continued existence of this most helpful journal? The research work which they encourage in all parts of the country is facilitated to a considerable extent by the references to other research work found in the *Index Medicus*. The machinery for publication is established and material is continually pouring into Washington. Can the trustees do a greater amount of good with the money which they are obliged to spend each year for its benefit? The medical profession is not unappreciative of its value; on the contrary, they recognize it fully, but for various reasons, some of which I have mentioned, they, most unfortunately, do not come to its aid as they most assuredly ought to.

I have occasionally received letters asking as to the advisability of having a medical library a branch of a general library. I do not think it at all desirable, because medical books and journals are of such a nature that they are not of general interest and special regulations have to be made for their consultation. Consequently appropriations for the purchase of such books are

grudgingly made, and, as the general library grows, the medical department is sure to suffer and is considered rather of an incubus. It is better for the doctors to have their own quarters and manage their own literature, even if at first the progress seems slow.

Judging from my own experience, I should say that the tendency of libraries in a city is to recognize the most prosperous and active medical library as the proper one to be the custodian of all their medical literature, and to this library they gradually send their medical collections. This is for the benefit of both parties. As an illustration of this let me refer to an article by Mr. Huntington in the *Medical Library and Historical Journal*, Vol. 2, 1904, on "The Medical Library Movement in the United States." In a list of medical libraries in the different cities he gives as those of Boston:

1 Boston Athenaeum Medical Dept.	1,500 vols.
2 Boston City Hospital	3,746 "
3 Boston Medical Library	35,000 "
4 College Physicians & Surgeons,	500 "
5 Massachusetts General Hospital	6,000 "
6 Boston Public Library	20,235 "
7 State Board of Health	3,500 "
8 Tufts College Medical School	675 "
9 Harvard Medical School	2,279 "

Let us look at the status at the present time. The following have deposited their medical books in the Boston Medical Library:

Boston Society for Medical Improvement.
 Boston Society for Medical Observation.
 Boston Dispensary.
 Gynecological Society of Boston.
 Roxbury Athenaeum.
 Boston Athenaeum.
 Harvard Medical School.
 Harvard University.
 Cambridge Public Library.
 Tufts College Medical School.
 Waltham Public Library.
 Boston Public Library.

Some books have also been received from the City Hospital and the Board of Health, thus leaving practically merely the

working libraries necessary for the large hospitals and the department collections of the Medical Schools.

Those who take an interest in medical literature and have the facilities for caring for it are the ones who should be entrusted with the charge of large collections of such works. Physicians and surgeons who have been connected with hospitals often leave their books to the hospital library. This seems to me to be much less desirable than that they should give their books, and especially their monographs and pamphlets, to the large library, which is open to all. The hospital library is necessarily small, is private and can grow only by discarding its older books.

As medicine assumes a more scientific basis the librarian has to add to his already large list of periodicals many that had hitherto been considered as having a place only in general or scientific collections. The term "biology" has come to have a very important and practical relation to medicine, and is no longer the sole property of the botanist and zoologist. In fact, the Boston Medical Library receives occasional calls from students of the Museum of Comparative Zoology in Cambridge for books and journals which a few years ago would have been considered quite outside the scope of a medical library. The development of mental science and psychology has brought with it the important question of deciding how far the medical library should go in the purchase of books treating on these subjects. The border line between them and medicine is surely changing very rapidly, and the neurological student is presenting his list of references which encroach more and more on what was recently thought to be pure psychology without practical medical bearing.

The former alleged antagonism between science and religion has certainly received some hard knocks of late, and the various forms of faith cure, Christian science, mental healing and psychotherapy, have compelled the librarian to add works on these subjects to his already crowded shelves. The recent appearance of such a journal as the *Zeitschrift für Religions-Psychologie* (the borderland between Theology and Medicine) shows that this matter is receiving, and will continue to receive, serious consideration in medical literature.

The interest in Tropical Medicine has resulted in adding an almost entirely new section to the library, and the Transactions of the Laboratories which make a special study of such diseases, and the journals dealing with the subject, are of great value. Works on comparative anatomy, physiology and pathology are

acquiring a very important position on account of the development of bacteriology and the more scientific study of disease and health in a broad way. Books on veterinary medicine which were formerly supposed to be of interest to no one except the horse doctor, redolent of the stable, are now called for by the students of scientific medicine.

Where all these expansions and branchings out will lead to or where they will end is a very difficult question to answer. It would seem that, although medical literature is being gradually turned out of the General Library, it is progressing in so many directions that it is assuming a much more extensive relation to the community at large than ever before and is less restricted to practitioners of medicine. This fact imposes on the Medical Library the duty of opening its rooms, under certain restrictions, to the general, non-medical public; it means a much greater use of its books, a much larger interest in its success and consequently a more important position in the educational world.

All this increased growth requires more money for books and still more for cataloging and maintenance; but money is not all that is needed in order to add to the value of a library. There is a great mass of material relating to medicine which never comes into the market at all, but which could fill a very important place. Every physician has in his possession pamphlets, newspaper clippings, photographs of medical men, medical schools and buildings, biographical notes, autographs, etc., which are either soon thrown away or become destroyed by improper care. Numbers of out of the way journals are consigned to the junk dealer as old paper without a thought that they may be just what is wanted to fill a gap in a set at the library. It is better to send all such miscellaneous material to the library and let the librarian be the judge of what is of value. It may be that the copy of a book or journal which the library possesses is incomplete, some pages or the index may be missing, and the book sent in may replace the imperfect volumes on the library shelves.

There is another point which I would like to mention and that is the advisability of the doctor's giving to the library during his life the books and journals which he wishes to contribute rather than deciding to leave them after his death. Very possibly nothing definite is said in his will about the disposition of his medical books, and his library is scattered or falls into the hands of those who have not the same interest in giving to the library that he had. If, on the other hand, he places in a library,

during his life, such books as his interest and generosity dictate, he can at any time have all the use of them that he wishes, and they are accessible as well to his medical confreres, who will be impressed with his generosity and perhaps be led to follow his example.

I am glad to speak of the action of the Boston Orthopedic Club. They have made an arrangement with the Boston Medical Library by which they get together all the monographs, theses, reprints, etc., on orthopedics which they can and deposit them in the Library. They have also added a large collection of X-ray plates. They furnish references and make suggestions to the Librarian in regard to the purchase of books, and one of their number has given a sum of money with which to buy foreign theses.

In these days, when the younger men of the profession are showing great activity in all the different specialties, I feel that the example of the Orthopedic Club needs only to be mentioned in order to be followed by similar clubs interested in other branches of medicine.

I have endeavored to point out to you some of the many directions in which the Medical Library is developing and how it is coming more and more to be an important factor in aiding the general welfare of the community. It is growing away from the narrow confines of the mere practice of medicine and is occupying a much broader field. It should endeavor to furnish to its readers the newest and the latest in medicine, but it should not forget that the present depends upon the past and not upon the future, and should make very earnest effort to secure what relates to medical men and matters of times gone by. The active co-operation of the medical men of the community is a great factor in helping the Library to supply whatever sort of medical knowledge is demanded of it.

